



DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[RTID 0648-XC738]

Marine Mammals; File No. 22187

AGENCY: National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Commerce.

ACTION: Notice; receipt of application for permit amendment.

SUMMARY: Notice is hereby given that Heather E. Liwanag, Ph.D., 1 Grand Avenue, San Luis Obispo, CA 93407-0401, has applied for an amendment to Scientific Research Permit No. 22187-03.

DATES: Written, telefaxed, or email comments must be received on or before [*INSERT DATE 30 DAYS AFTER DATE OF PUBLICATION IN THE **FEDERAL REGISTER***].

ADDRESSES: The application and related documents are available for review by selecting “Records Open for Public Comment” from the “Features” box on the Applications and Permits for Protected Species (APPS) home page, <https://apps.nmfs.noaa.gov>, and then selecting File No. 22187 from the list of available applications. These documents are also available upon written request via email to NMFS.Pr1Comments@noaa.gov.

Written comments on this application should be submitted via email to NMFS.Pr1Comments@noaa.gov. Please include File No. 22187 in the subject line of the email comment.

Those individuals requesting a public hearing should submit a written request via email to NMFS.Pr1Comments@noaa.gov. The request should set forth the specific reasons why a hearing on this application would be appropriate.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Sara Young or Shasta McClenahan, Ph.D., (301)427-8401.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The subject amendment to Permit No. 22187-03 is requested under the authority of the Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1361 *et seq.*) and the regulations governing the taking and importing of marine mammals (50 CFR part 216).

Permit No. 22187-03, issued on April 1, 2022, authorizes the permit holder to conduct research to establish a catalog of northern elephant seals (*Mirounga angustirostris*) in California, primarily at Piedras Blancas and near Vandenberg Space Force Base. Types of authorized takes include behavioral observations, measurements, external instrumentation, bioacoustic recordings, acoustic playbacks, marking, flipper tagging, capture, and non-invasive physiological sampling. The permit holder is requesting the permit be amended to add the Channel Islands in California as a research location due to the inability to conduct tagging studies at Piedras Blancas. The applicant also proposes to deploy an additional satellite tag model and requests to pull one whisker per seal handled. The applicant also seeks to increase the number of harbor seals (*Phoca vitulina*) that may be unintentionally harassed from 300 to 450 annually due to the change in location. The permit would remain valid until March 31, 2024.

In compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (42 U.S.C. 4321 *et seq.*), an initial determination has been made that the activity proposed is categorically excluded from the requirement to prepare an environmental assessment or environmental impact statement.

Concurrent with the publication of this notice in the **Federal Register**, NMFS is forwarding copies of this application to the Marine Mammal Commission and its Committee of Scientific Advisors.

Dated: February 8, 2023.

Julia M. Harrison,

Chief, Permits and Conservation Division,

Office of Protected Resources,

National Marine Fisheries Service.

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